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No. 0610/68

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
1 August 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Communist Intentions as Reflected
in Captured Documents and Prisoner Interroga-
tions

Summary

Captured documents and prisoner interrogations in late May and early June suggested that the Communists at that time intended to press their "second offensive" against Saigon and other targets over an extended period. Since mid-June, however, information from these sources indicates that the Communists cut short their "second offensive" and instead embarked on a period of regrouping and refitting. These sources do not provide a clear indication as to the extent to which political considerations may have influenced the apparent change in plans. The most recently available documents, dated in early July, indicate that the Communists will renew offensive operations during August.

Notes: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated with the Office of National Estimates and the Director's Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs.

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1. Recently captured documents and prisoners indicate that the enemy is preparing new attacks during the current period of reduced military activity.

2. Communist forces were advised that major new military victories were required to make the Paris talks "really meaningful" in a directive issued on 5 June by the Viet Cong regional authority for Saigon and its environs. The document's language suggested that a new general offensive was envisioned. It said, "We must commit all our might to successfully implement an all-out attack and general uprising to seize power...."

3. More explicit reference to plans for a new general offensive was contained in captured notes made in late June by a cadre of the Viet Cong 2nd Battalion south of Saigon. The May offensive was ended, the notes said, "to permit (Communist) forces to strengthen themselves and make preparations for the Third General Offensive."

4. Many documents and prisoners have provided testimony on Communist plans for new attacks against Saigon. According to a circular apparently published in late May, the Communists intended to follow up their "Second General Offensive" with new attacks against the city through June and July. During this period, forces were to be strengthened and routes prepared apparently for more widespread attacks after July.

5. COSVN's Current Affairs Committee issued a directive on 10 June to bring the war "into the heart of Saigon" and to increase military activity in nearby districts. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] who was captured on [REDACTED], stated that as of the time of his capture the plan was to launch a third "phase" of the second general offensive against Saigon by late June. This was to terminate the large Communist offensive operations until after the southwest monsoon in October or November, at which time a Third General Offensive would begin.

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6. Subsequent evidence, however, indicated that the Communists decided sometime in June to postpone their attacks on Saigon to late July and August. For example, captured orders dated 13 June to intensify intelligence collection on the central sections of Saigon asked that this work be completed by early August. A captured battalion executive officer has testified that his battalion had received orders on 1 June to attack Saigon between 19 July and early August. Another letter, dated 26 June, to a unit in Subregion 4 ordered preparations for a rocket attack in late July to be coordinated with other attacks throughout the region.

7. A Viet Cong fighter who defected on 26 June stated that artillery attacks planned to begin on 28 June against Saigon as well as Da Nang and Khe Sanh had been postponed, although he gave no reason.

8. A captain captured on 8 July stated that all Communist forces in his area, Subregion 3, south of Saigon, were understrength and he did not believe the next offensive would begin against Saigon until after mid-August.

9. Four separate references to 5 August as the deadline to prepare for the "third climaxing phase" were contained in notebooks captured south-east of Saigon.

10. In the Mekong Delta area, several Viet Cong defectors have described Communist efforts to build up local forces. Two ralliers claimed a "general mobilization" policy was in effect. Other ralliers said new force structures were being created out of small local force units.

11. To the north, Da Nang and other cities and towns in Quang Nam Province were scheduled for sustained attacks through the end of July, according to attack plans captured from a Communist sapper battalion.

12. These reports aside, however, documentary and prisoner-defector evidence on Communist attack

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plans outside the Saigon area is limited. There has been relatively little time since mid-June for documents to be issued by the enemy, captured by allied forces, processed, and reported to Washington. Moreover, the recent period of reduced contact in much of South Vietnam has probably reduced the number of documents and prisoners captured.

13. Finally, it should be kept in mind that captured directives and indoctrination documents are more likely to instruct commanders and fighters to prepare for new action than to suspend activity. Captured documents therefore do not constitute firm and independent proof that the enemy does or does not plan to renew the offensive when preparations permit. It is possible, in fact, that incoming documents during the next few weeks will show some further slippage in the timing of enemy attack plans as the Communists attempt among other things to cope with allied counteroperations and their own military shortcomings.

14. Attached at annex are verbatim excerpts from selected pertinent documents.

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ANNEXExcerpts From Selected Captured Documents

"Although the enemy had consolidated the defense of the city area and had been aware of the second general offensive, they could not disrupt it. Our military victories throughout South Vietnam, and Subregion 3 in particular, have proven that the enemy will not have the capabilities to check the third general offensive and the situation is favorable for our forces to achieve greater successes. Therefore, we must conduct violent and continuous attacks to prevent the enemy from strengthening his forces.... In compliance with orders from higher headquarters, the second general offensive is to be ended to permit our forces to strengthen themselves and make preparations for the third general offensive." (Notebook with entries dated from 27 March to 5 July by a cadre from Subregion 3, south of Saigon).

* * *

"The war must be brought into the heart of Saigon, military activities increased in its surrounding areas, penetration corridors consolidated and all enemy access routes to Saigon cut off." (Directive issued on 16 June by the Current Affairs Committee of COSVN).

* * *

"From 10 to 15 June 68 E (Thu Duc Regiment) had withdrawn for reconsolidation and from 15 June to 30 July 68 it would prepare for the third climax.... Preparation for the upcoming climax: E should break through the ninth precinct (in Saigon) on the first day (of the upcoming offensive)." Notebook with entries dated 19 June and 13 July by a cadre of the Thu Duc Regiment, subordinate to Subregion 4, east of Saigon).

* * *

"Ammunition, provisions, and drugs, as well as boats, must be readied beginning 20 July to 5 August

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to meet requirements for the third climaxing phase." (Notebook with entries by an unidentified cadre dated from 1 January to 13 July, captured in Subregion 4).

* * *

"Another shipment of rockets will be sent to your area very soon. These rockets should be concealed with extreme care, since they will be used in the upcoming operation. Instruct group 10 to make preparation for an attack late in July." (Letter dated 26 June from a cadre of Subregion 4).

* * *

"Based upon the military action trend in the third quarter of 1968, the formation and training of cadre is an important task and a decisive factor for the fulfillment of immediate missions. BR-4 will need a greater number of cadre because it will assume a new and higher position. In the future, its armed force will grow in size and strength...the command committee of present units should be consolidated. This reorganization must be completed by July 1968." (Notebook captured on 2 July with entries by a cadre of Subregion 4).

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No. 0609/68

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
1 August 1968

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Recent Vietnamese Communist Political
Action in South VietnamSummary

The Communists in the past month or so have apparently increased the tempo of their political activity in South Vietnam, although hard information on the scope of their effort and on the degree of their success or failure is lacking. They have been giving increased domestic and international publicity to their Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces, which first surfaced somewhat unsuccessfully during Tet and was revived later in the spring. They are developing the Alliance as a supposed haven for non-Communists opposed to the Saigon regime, but they continue to emphasize the activities and pronouncements of the National Liberation Front, suggesting that they are retaining maximum flexibility on the future roles and relationships of the two organizations.

In the countryside, the Communists have been endeavoring to create the trappings of a democratic administration in areas to which they have gained access, presumably to be merged with the shadow Party-Front administration they have long maintained in regions under their control. Again information is sketchy, but it does point to a continuing effort by the Communists to develop a situation in which the Front, the Alliance, and the rural "revolutionary administrations" can be orchestrated to assure them a strong voice in South Vietnam's political future.

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The Alliance

1. After some months of relative obscurity, the Vietnam Alliance of National, Democratic, and Peace Forces last month became the subject of renewed Communist propaganda. On 11 July, in its first major statement since mid-May, the Alliance, in the midst of "refuting" US arguments at the Paris talks, hinted at a new and larger, future political role for itself. The statement reinforced other indications that the Communists are no longer adhering to the principle that the National Liberation Front alone must represent South Vietnam in a settlement of the war.

2. The statement, broadcast on both Hanoi and Liberation radios, avows that "we are ready to talk with the US Government...and to contact and talk with the National Liberation Front...to end the war soon, to re-establish peace, and to regain national independence and sovereignty." The Alliance has previously indicated its desire to talk to the US, but this was its first official mention of a mediator's role between the US and the Front.

3. A more explicit exposition of the Alliance's role in negotiations and a future coalition government was carried in a Tokyo Yomiuri interview with an unnamed Alliance official on 6 and 7 July, but this presentation lacks the Communist stamp of approval implicit in statements carried by Hanoi or Front media. Claiming that the Alliance could speak for the Front because it has its support and represents a broad spectrum of non-Communist South Vietnamese, this official said that the Alliance "may take care of negotiations with the US for the time being" on behalf of the Front. If such talks occur and the US abandons the Thieu-Ky regime, the spokesman stated, the Alliance will establish a coalition government with non-Communist Front members and any "patriots" except such "puppets and traitors" as Thieu and Ky.

Growth of the Alliance Mechanism

4. Little information is available on the Alliance's recent efforts to expand its apparatus and membership. There have been reports of failure to establish organizations in Ban Me Thuot and Can Tho. There have been organizational attempts reported

in a few other areas, but it is not known what progress has been made in most of the country. The Alliance appears to be having some success in I Corps, particularly in Quang Ngai Province. In late June it was discovered that several members of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNP) in Quang Ngai had joined the Alliance, and a number of ARVN 2nd Division officers are reported to be involved with the organization. In addition, there are reports that the Quang Ngai Pagoda is the center for Alliance organizational efforts in the province, and others that militant Buddhists in Quang Tin Province recently met in Tam Ky to organize an Alliance.

5. In Saigon, both the national and the Saigon Alliances appear to be gaining a measure of support. Youth leaders are expressing fear that the chairman of the Saigon Students' Union (SSU), who has a close friend on the Alliance central committee, may have left to join the organization. If true, he would be the second chairman of the SSU to do so. There are also indications that several lawyers and judges from Saigon have joined but wish to keep their names secret.

6. As a possible adjunct to the Alliance, pro-Communist labor leaders have apparently succeeded in establishing a labor union in Saigon. According to a clandestine source, two former leaders of the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor (CVL) who defected to the Alliance shortly after Tet returned to Saigon in June and persuaded a Communist-leaning labor leader to organize a union of merchants from Saigon's markets. As its first act, the union signed a peace petition addressed to Prime Minister Huong by a group of trade unions.

The Liberation Front

7. Despite new emphasis on the Alliance, the Communists frequently shift their propaganda emphasis back to the Front, indicating that their strategy and tactics for using the two organizations are still evolving. The Front continues to issue authoritative pronouncements; its proceedings recently met; it continues to try to expand its representation abroad; and it is portrayed as continuing to direct the Communist war effort in the South.

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Action in the Countryside

8. In the rural areas, the Communists reportedly have accelerated their political activity since about mid-May following a period in which their primary post-Tet activities focused on gaining new territory, recruiting, and rebuilding forces. Reports of efforts to establish "revolutionary administrations" at the village and hamlet levels increased during late May and June although information on the success or failure of these efforts remains fragmentary. A high-level directive ordering the establishment of such "people's committees" had been captured as early as mid-March. Little concrete implementation, however, had been noted until recently.

9. Most of the reporting on Communist political activity in the countryside comes from agents and informants, and the Saigon government itself is less than forthcoming on the subject, making hard information difficult to obtain. The relative impunity with which the Communists move through much of the countryside, however, offers little reason for complacency. In the past two months nearly all provinces of II and IV Corps and scattered provinces of I and III Corps have reported increased Communist attempts to elect or otherwise install "people's committees" at the local level. The Communists themselves have publicized the election of village administrations in a few specific locales and have claimed extensive success in the Delta; a few prisoners and ralliers have confirmed such election activity. Available information indicates that they have made strides in a few provinces while in others they have relied on "exile administrations," the appointment of party committees to be "introduced" to the villages, or the renaming of existing Liberation Front committees. In many instances, they have reportedly run up against popular apathy, and their newly established people's committees have either dissolved, defected, or been apprehended when a modicum of government presence was restored.

10. Despite apparently serious problems and only spotty successes, the Communists evidently hope to use the trappings of elected village and hamlet administrations to lay claim to control over a significant portion of the countryside. They have in mind

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an eventual coalition government from the grass roots up, or, failing that, a possible cease-fire in place. They have generally avoided linking such committees with either the Liberation Front or the Alliance, although in at least one instance an Alliance source publicly indicated that they would be an extension of the Alliance organization. The likelihood is furthered by indications that the revolutionary administrations are to be expanded upward to district and province levels, and into the cities. The Communists have already claimed the existence of "self-management committees" in four of Saigon's precincts.

11. Reporting from the provinces indicates that the Communists have also been active along traditional political and subversive lines. Terrorist intimidation involving the assassination and abduction of local government officials, for example, has been heavy in recent months. The Communists are also giving greater emphasis to proselyting government troops and refugees, in an effort to encourage both troop defections and the return of people to areas under their control. They have apparently scored some individual successes in both targets.

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